DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 786 FL 022 490

AUTHOR Schmidt, Ken
TITLE Adapting Classroom Activities for Multiple Needs and Purposes: "Find Someone Who..."
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Conference (Seoul, Korea, 1994).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Journal Articles (080) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
JOURNAL CIT Language Teaching: The Korea TESOL Journal; v2 n1 Apr 1994

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Class Activities; *Classroom Communication; Communicative Competence (Languages); *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Instructional Materials; Second Language Instruction; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

An English-as-a-Foreign Language instructor's repertoire of effective classroom activities is extended not only through acquiring useful, new ideas, but through adapting these activities (new and old) for varied needs and purposes. This article focuses on the potential for adaptation of one popular, communicative activity: "Find someone who..." Suggestions for modification include: employing different grammar points, increasing linguistic complexity, decreasing linguistic support, broadening the information gap, using follow-up questions, one-word cues and picture cues, looking for "no" answers, using information questions, doing indirect questioning, linking with follow-up activities, developing topical themes, and using trivia quizzes and personalized cues. Together, these modifications exemplify how many activities can be adapted to better reach our students and respond to the various needs we encounter. (Contains 13 references.) (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 378 786

Adapting Classroom Activities for Multiple Needs and Purposes: "Find someone who..."

By Ken Schmidt

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kenneth Schmidt
Mary Nelson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FL022490

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Adapting classroom activities for multiple needs

by Ken Schmidt

EFL INSTRUCTORS are always glad to discover useful new techniques and activities, but the true potential of these ideas is only realized as they are adapted to fit varied classroom situations. Through adaptation, each new activity represents not just a single, narrow addition to the teacher's repertoire, but becomes an open-ended suite of activities modifiable for a wide range of needs and purposes. Old standbys also find fresh utility as they are modified and applied in new ways, in new contexts. This article attempts to show a few of the ways activities can be modified—particularly focusing on the potential for adaptation of one popular communicative activity: "Find someone who..."

1. Base activity

"FIND SOMEONE WHO..." activities are often used in English conversation classes as ice-breakers (Moskowitz, 1978, p. 50) or to give students extensive oral practice on particular structures (Rinvolucri, 1984, p. 35). Following presentation and initial work with the the present perfect, for example, the teacher hands out a sheet containing cues, such as:

Find someone who...
- has been to New York.
- has seen an elephant.
- has flown in an airplane.
- etc.

After sufficient explanation and demonstration, students go around the room asking each other "yes/no" questions formed from these cues and writing down the names of students who answer "yes." The student who has found the most "yes" answers (only one "yes" answer per cue) at the end of the given time is the winner.

Positive aspects of the activity. Teachers can feel torn between the desire to promote communicative language use and the need to work with particular points of grammar, especially when dealing with grammatically based syllabi. This conflict is often based on a limited perception of grammar exercises as necessarily mechanical, form-centered drills (Celce-Murcia, 1992, p. 406). In fact, communication and grammar practice are not mutually exclusive (Helgesen & Brown, 1989, p. 4; Ur, 1988, p. 5; Riggenbach & Lazaraton, 1991, p. 126). "Find someone who..." activities, for example, provide opportunity to practice a given structure multiple times, but in a meaningful, communicative manner. Students get out of their seats and move around, interacting with and learning about each other. They use the same forms repeatedly, but the focus is on meaning in the context of their own, real lives. There is no feeling of slogging through another boring drill. Other positive factors in "Find someone who..." are the game-like aspect (adding a positive pressure to the activity), the clarity/transparency of the task (students immediately grasp the procedure), and the strong linguistic support for the task (in the example above, students simply change the cue provided, "has had a car accident," to "Have you ever had a car accident?").

Need for adaptation. This basic activity is a good starting point, but the need for modification is apparent as soon as an instructor begins to think about situations in an actual class:

- They're working with the future tense now. Can we use it with that?
- They don't need that much support. I want them to produce the appropriate forms on their own.
- The task should have a wider information gap, forcing them to really listen to each other.
- They need chances to create their own meaning, to follow their own interests.
- We need activities that allow each student to work at his/her own level.
- They need more chances to develop conversational strategies and have extended conversations in English.
- I'd like the task to include a visual component.
- We're working with a topic/function, not a grammar point.

The range of possible needs and purposes is limitless, but so is the potential for adaptation to meet them. The suggestions presented below exemplify the types of modifications that can be made, with particular emphasis on targeting different language points, making activities more challenging, communicative, and student-centered (increasing student interest, independence, and creativity), adapting for multi-level groups, extending with follow-up activities, and developing topical themes.

2. Employing different grammar points

ADAPT THE ACTIVITY to fit the grammar point currently being studied. We sometimes miss the chance to apply a potentially effective activity simply because we associate it with too limited a range of grammatical/functional/topical contexts.

For example, you can use "Find someone who..." to work with:

- *future forms:*
  ...will probably work for his/her parent(s) after graduation.
  ...is going to buy a car in the near future.

and purposes: "Find someone who..."

- *past forms:*
  ...was watching TV when Ben Johnson "won" the 100 m dash at the 1988 Olympics.
  ...played baseball in high school.
  ...had been to North America before starting to study at this school.
- *conditionals:*
  ...would quit her/his job if s/he won two billion won in the lottery.
  ...will transfer to an American university if s/he passes the TOEFL.
- *adverbs of frequency:*
  ..exercises at least twice a week.
  ...often goes to the movies.
- *prepositions:*
  ...grew up in Pusan.
  ...works at a bank.
  ...lives on a busy street.

The activity can be adapted to target almost any grammar point as dictated by the need for practice with newly presented material, for consolidation and review of previously studied points, or for diagnosing areas of weakness prior to instruction.

3. Increasing linguistic complexity

ADD SOME linguistic complexity, forcing students to analyze meaning more carefully. For example, to the present perfect example of the "base activity" above, add cues like:

...has read a newspaper or magazine today.
...has been to a movie this month.

In the original example, all questions could be formed using "ever." With additions such as the above, however, students *asking* questions must now recognize that the use of "ever" is not appropriate when a limited period of time is specified. Students *receiving* questions must now listen more carefully, because not all questions refer to their entire lifetimes.

4. Decreasing linguistic support

TAKE AWAY some linguistic support, forcing students to produce correct forms on their own. As a first step, take "has" out of each cue and place it in the initial "Find someone who.." line:

Find someone who has...
been to New York.
seen an elephant.
flown in an airplane.

Without "has" in each cue, students are likely to produce the auxiliary on their own, without referring back to the first line. However, the support is still accessible if needed.

Taking another step, have students supply the auxiliary and the correct verb form themselves.

Find someone who...
(be) to New York.
(see) an elephant.
(fly) in an airplane.

Students must now produce the auxiliary "have" and the correct past participle (e.g., "Have you ever been to New York?").

Going even further, blanks could be left in place of articles, making students supply the correct articles themselves:

(be) to ___ New York.
(see) ___ elephant.
(meet) ___ President of Korea.

Recalling a linguistic item or pattern and using it correctly in a communicative context can greatly increase its prominence in memory, making it much easier to produce again later (Stevick, 1983, p. 34). Increasing the level of difficulty—without outstripping student ability—also keeps students from "sleep-walking" through an activity and heightens interest level. However, the task must not become so complex that students become frustrated or distracted from the central purpose of the activity. As a case in point, the last example above is in danger of being too complex and might best be used merely to review the present perfect while also going on to check article use.

5. Broadening the information gap

SETTING UP AN "information gap," in which one participant has information the other(s) needs (and vice versa), forces students to listen to each other to complete the task and is vital in developing effective, motivating, communicative activities (Ur, 1988, p. 22). An information gap is present in "Find someone who...", but if students all hold the same list of cues, they have an idea of what questions to expect.

To broaden the information gap, hand out several different sheets of cues so that no more than one third of the students have the same sheet. Students thus spend the bulk of the activity answering questions without the benefit of reading them first and questioners cannot simply say, for example, "Answer the third question" or "How about number three?"

Better yet, put each cue on a separate slip of paper (Ur, 1988, p. 237) and place a large pile of these cues in a central

location. Each student picks up a cue from the pile and moves around, asking the indicated question to others until getting a "yes" answer or giving up. S/he then picks up a new slip and repeats the process. At the end of the allotted time, the student with the most "yes" answer slips wins.

The activities described thus far have been fairly communicative, but not particularly conversational or creative. Real conversation involves much more than asking scripted questions and recording yes or no answers. In real conversation, we create our own meaning, we adjust for and respond to each others' verbal and non-verbal cues, we together negotiate topics and determine how far or in what direction we will pursue them (Brown, 1987, p. 206; Leeman-Guthrie, 1984, p. 41). We can only help students develop these skills by giving them more control over activities—by making them more student-centered (Crookall & Oxford, 1990, p. 13; Brown, 1987, p. 213). The following ideas represent steps in that direction.

It is important to note here that the more student-directed/open-ended an activity is, the more crucial a well-thought-out demonstration/elicitation period becomes. In-class preparation should always make the task as clear as possible and offer sufficient linguistic and contextual support for its completion (Helgesen & Brown, 1989, p. 8). Often, however, students catch the basic idea of a proposed activity (and complete the task in a dry, minimal fashion), but fail to grasp and explore its full potential. This is understandable when we consider that students typically only have a few short minutes to prepare for an activity that the instructor may have pondered over for hours. How can we expect them to see the same richness and potential for creative, stimulating interaction that we do, especially in a second language? Demonstrations must offer students a glimpse of an activity's potential. If an activity can be taken in intriguing directions, the demonstration should point the way and allow participants to choose directions that interest them. Eliciting student ideas as part of the demonstration process is especially helpful in making sure students are getting the idea and encouraging imaginative participation.

6. Using follow-up questions

REQUIRE STUDENTS to ask at least two follow-up questions on the same or a related topic whenever they find a "yes" answer:

...(be) to New York.
S1: Have you ever been to New York?
S2: Yes, I have.
S1: Oh really? How many times have you gone?
S2: Oh, about five.
S1: What did you do the last time you were there?
S2: Well, I went to the Statue of Liberty... Oh yeah, I saw Woody Allen at a Broadway show!

Students are encouraged to be as creative as they like, stretching their abilities, trying out new forms, asking questions they are interested in, and forming conversational strategies (e.g., negotiating how to pursue the conversation, finding profitable questioning gambits). Each student can work at his/her own level. Another student might simply follow up the same opening question ("Have you ever been to New York?") with "When did you go?" and "Did you like it?" A good demonstration would include a number of intriguing, unexpected follow-up questions to encourage creativity, and several simple questions to reassure lower-level or less confident students that their contributions are equally valid.

A possible objection to using open-ended follow-up questions is that the amount of practice on specific target structures (if this is a purpose of the activity) may be reduced. However, this is balanced by the profitable combination of still-significant structure practice with opportunity for noncontrolled language use. The instructor can thus monitor command of target structures as well as pick up on obvious student needs in general conversation. Feedback on these points can be especially profitable, as it fills student-felt needs for the language they were missing during the activity. Outstanding or helpful ideas/strategies picked up while monitoring students can also be shared with the class.

Motivationally, moreover, while the "contest" aspect becomes less primary with so much conversation going on, students generally feel more than compensated by the increased enjoyment of creative, meaningful interaction.

7. Using one-word cues

PUSH CREATIVITY FURTHER, rather than rigidly prescribing the questions students ask, by providing only one-word cues:

Find someone who...
...New York...
...elephant...
...fly...

Introducing and demonstrating the activity, the teacher elicits various possibilities for several cues from the class. Ideas can be steered toward any structure(s) being studied or left totally open for fluency work. Any appropriate form of each cue can be used. Students are thus free to form questions which vary greatly in meaning and degree of complexity (e.g., "Have you ever flown in a small plane?"; "Do you know what fly-paper is?"; "If someone offered you eight thousand won to eat a fly, would you do it?"). In the previous activities, the opening question was always prescribed. Here, students can tailor opening questions specifically for the person they are talking with.

This variation can be an effective "get to know you" ice-breaker exercise for the first day of class. After a clear introduction and demonstration, students use the activity to meet and find out something about each of their classmates. The cues and structure of the activity make it much easier for students to start interacting with each other than if they are simply told: "Get to know your classmates by asking each one a few questions." At the end of the given time, students can introduce each other to the rest of the class (in chain fashion) using the information they have gathered. Students with the most "yes" answers can be congratulated for their admirable outgoingness.

8. Using picture cues

USE PICTURE CUES to give vocabulary review and extend student creativity, while providing enhanced visual reinforcement (Stevick, 1983, p. 24, 69; Eyring, 1992, p. 347):

Find someone who...

Using picture cues for previously learned vocabulary, students must recall the terms and employ them in their questions: e.g., "Would you like to be an airplane pilot some day?"; "Do you have a telephone in your room?" As with one-word cues, structural patterns can be prescribed or left open.

Further emphasizing creativity, students can be left free to ask any questions the images bring to mind. For example:

"Would you rather travel by train or by air?"

"How do you feel when the phone rings late at night?"

9. Looking for "No" answers

THERE IS NO LAW that all "Find someone who..." activities must demand "yes" answers. Do an activity aimed at eliciting "no" answers:

Find someone who...
- has never been abroad.
- hasn't played golf this year.

Looking for "no" answers brings variety to the activity and, with follow-up questions (see #6 above), gives students needed practice in working through a negative response to continue a conversation:

S1: Have you ever been abroad?
S2: No, I haven't.
S1: Would you like to?
S2: I think so.
S1: If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you like to go?

Adding some complexity (see #3 above), cues targeting "yes" answers and cues targeting "no" answers can be mixed together in the same cue list:

- has tried water-skiing
- has never been abroad.
- has been to a hot spring this month.
- hasn't played golf this year.

10. Using information questions

STUDENTS DO NOT even have to start-off with yes/no questions. Have them use only Wh- forms to find the required information:

Find someone who(se)...
- favorite sport is tennis.
- lives in a 2-story apartment.
- hates to eat kimchi.

Rather than directly asking "Is tennis your favorite sport?", a student might ask, "What's your favorite sport?" Multiple questions may be needed, e.g.,:

(Cue:) lives in a 2-story apartment.

S1: What kind of building do you live in?
S2: An apartment.
S1: How many floors does it have?
S2: Three.
S1: Too bad, I need someone with a 2-story building.

This variation not only gives students needed practice generating effective information questions, but adds variety and a motivating degree of difficulty to the task.

11. Indirect questioning

MORE ADVANCED STUDENTS can be prohibited from using any word appearing in the cue:

Find someone who...
- likes grap ruit.
- enjoyed the movie "Dances with Wolves."
- would rather visit Paris than New York.

S1: Have you seen any Kevin Costner films?
S2: Yes, I have.
S1: How about the one with Native Americans and U.S. soldiers?
S2: Oh, "Dances With Wolves." I saw it.
S1: What did you think of it?
S2: I loved it!
S1: Bingo!

Here, students practice strategies for communicating when needed words are not available to them. They also gain experience with subtle questioning skills that are needed when barging directly to the point is not appropriate.

12. Linking with follow-up activities

"FIND SOMEONE WHO..." activities can yield a great deal of information for use in follow-up activities. For example, have students report back to the group or to partners on things they learned about each other. This can be left quite open, or can be aimed at communicative practice on particular grammar points, e.g., reported speech:

S1: What did you ask Sun Yi?
S2: I asked her if she had ever been to Cheju Island.
S1: What did she say?
S2: She told me she had been there many times and said she had actually lived there for two years.

Thus, the "Find someone who..." activity may simply lay the groundwork for a follow-up activity containing the central objective (e.g., using reported speech). Various activities can thus be chained together with each link building support for the activities to follow—providing variety while preserving a logical development of context and language. For example:

1st link - "Find someone who..." activity
2nd link - reporting back to a partner
3rd link - together generating further questions for a more in-depth interview with one of the people you talked to
4th link - interviewing that classmate
5th link - doing a short write-up of the interview

13. Developing topical themes

USE THE ACTIVITY to develop a topic for discussion or a context for class work. For example, a lesson centering on leisure time activities might include:

Find someone who...
plays a musical instrument.
hates going to large parties.
feels nervous when he/she has too much free time
jogs at least twice a week.
would rather cook at home than go out to a restaurant.
would like to spend more time with his/her family.
watches movies on his/her VCR at least once a month.
frequently has to work late.
enjoys going to concerts.
would like to be involved in more activities.
plays a sport frequently.
has more than one hobby.

Used in this way, the activity serves as a door—helping students to start thinking about the topic, previewing vocabulary, bringing background information and personal experience into play—preparing students for oral or written work to come, e.g., dialog, discussion, video, essay, reading passage.

14. Using trivia quizzes

USE TRIVIA QUIZZES as intriguing, fun ways to help students focus in on lesson themes or practice grammar points. For example, an activity on general geographical knowledge (with a secondary grammatical focus on superlatives) could include:

Find someone who...
knows what the deepest lake in the world is.
knows if the Empire State Building is the tallest building in the world.
knows what the largest country in Africa is.
knows if Brazilians speak Spanish.

Other possibilities include holidays ("...knows what some popular Thanksgiving foods are."), cultural points ("...knows if ten percent is a good tip for a waiter."), even vocabulary or idioms ("...knows what 'I have goose bumps' means."). At the activity's end, the answers for each question are elicited and the student who has found the most correct answers wins.

Besides developing topical themes, these examples provide grammar practice with indirect question forms: "Do you know (if)...?" Larson-Freeman (1991, p. 281) points out the importance of attending to the pragmatic dimension of grammar, and trivia quizzes provide a good sense of the general context in which indirect questions are used, i.e., seeking information without assuming that the other party necessarily knows the answer.

To help students produce these forms more independently, take away some linguistic support (see #4 above) and provide only simple question forms as cues which students must then convert to indirect questions:

(Cue:) What's the deepest lake in the world?

S1: Do you know what the deepest lake in the world is?
S2: Yes, it's Lake Baikal in Russia.
S1: Great! How do you spell that?

15. Using personalized cues

IF, THROUGH conversation, dialog journals, essays, etc., you are privy to information about each student that would be appropriate for sharing in class, do an activity with personalized cues:

Find someone who...
ate 12 donuts in one day last week.
has always dreamed of going around the world.
enjoys knitting.
was at the last Bon Jovi concert.
has acted professionally.
just got his/her driver's license.

Students can test their intuition and knowledge about each other, searching for the one (or more) student who fits each cue. If sensitively done, this can be a real community-building time as students get a feel for how well they know each other and find out some surprising things.

Another type of personalized cue directs students to find others with common interests, opinions, backgrounds, etc.:

Find someone who...
was in the same kind of club in high school.
ate the same thing for dinner last night.
really likes your favorite movie.
had the same major in college.
feels the same way about no-rae-bang.
would do the same thing if s/he were handed eight hundred thousand won by a stranger.

A less controlled alternative might involve students finding any points of commonality they can within domains specified by the cues, e.g., leisure time activities, school subjects, travel.

The pleasure of finding areas of commonality with classmates and the related personal investment in the task can yield important motivational and learning benefits (Taylor, 1987, p. 47). Again, however, care must be taken

that students are not forced into inappropriately personal exchange.

Conclusion

"FIND SOMEONE WHO..." activities are fun ways to bring meaningful, communicative practice and interaction to the EFL classroom. Appropriate structures, functions, topics, and formats can be selected and combined to yield a great number of potential activities. Happily, the same is true of almost any teaching idea. The rewards for our students and ourselves are great as we expand on and adapt ideas to better reach our students and meet the wide range of needs we encounter. ■

References

Brown, H.D. (1987). *Principles of language learning and teaching.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.

Celce-Murcia, M. (1992). Formal grammar instruction: An educator comments... *TESOL Quarterly, 26* (2), 406-408.

Crookall, D., & Oxford, R.L. (1990). Linking language learning and simulation/gaming. In D. Crookall & R.L. Oxford (Eds.), *Simulation, gaming, and language learning* (pp. 3-24). New York: Newbury House Publishers.

Eyring, J.L. (1992). Experiential language learning. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 347-359). New York: Newbury House.

Helgesen, M. & Brown, S. (1989). Support and grammar teaching: Learning from the communicative approach. *The Language Teacher, 13* (6), 4-8.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1991). Teaching grammar. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 279-296). New York: Newbury House.

Leeman-Guthrie, E.M. (1984). Intake, communication, and second-language teaching. In S.J. Savignon & M.S. Berns (Eds.), *Initiatives in communicative language teaching: A book of readings* (pp. 35-54). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Moskowitz, G. (1978). *Caring and sharing in the foreign language class: A sourcebook on humanistic techniques.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Riggenbach, H. & Lazaraton, A. (1991). Promoting oral communication skills. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 125-136). New York: Newbury House.

Rinvolucri, M. (1984). *Grammar games.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stevick, E. (1982). *Teaching and learning languages.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, B.P. (1987). Teaching ESL: Incorporating a communicative, student-centered component. In M.H. Long & J.C. Richards (Eds.), *Methodology in TESOL: A book of readings* (pp. 45-60). New York: Newbury House.

Ur, P. (1988). *Grammar practice activities.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

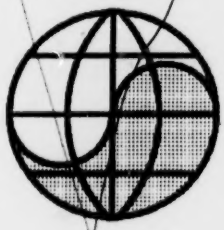
Ken Schmidt was at the Department of Linguistics, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. He is now working at Sendai Shirayuri Gakuen in Sendai, Japan.

1994 Korea TESOL Conference

Where the Past Meets the Future:

Preparing the EFL Learner for the 21st Century

October 14-16, 1994
Sogang University, Seoul



Call for Papers

Deadline: April 30, 1994

The following topics are invited for presentation:

- Student and teacher motivation
- CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning)
- Cross-cultural communication
- Global issues
- Culture-specific materials adaptation
- Cooperative learning
- Methods and techniques for preparing EFL learners to communicate in an international setting
- ESP (English for Specific Purposes)
- The psychology of learning
- The future of bi-lingual education

Send your presentation proposal to:

Korea TESOL 1994 Conference Committee
c/o Carl Dusthimer, Conference Co-Chair
Dept. of English Language & Literature
Hannam University
133 O-Jung Dong
Taejon, Republic of Korea 300-791
Tel (H) 042-623-8472
Fax (H) 042-623-8472

(Please use the form on page 12.)